

Dear Community Member or Educator:

This February, the American School Bus Council is celebrating the hundreds of thousands of dedicated men and women who ensure that more than 25 million American kids get to and from school safely each day. To show our appreciation, we are launching **Love The Bus!**, a national education effort designed to inform parents, students, school districts, legislators and the public about the special role that the yellow school bus plays in our communities.

**Where do you come in? It's easy.**

As part of this effort, the American School Bus Council is asking school districts and communities across the country to participate in **Love The Bus!**, to show local school bus drivers that they are cared for and appreciated.

**On February 1, the American School Bus Council will launch a new Web site, [www.LoveTheBus.com](http://www.LoveTheBus.com), which will provide a number of tools to educate students and parents on school bus safety.**

**Specifically, you can use this Web site to:**

- Have your students or children log onto [www.LoveTheBus.com](http://www.LoveTheBus.com) to create and print out a personalized valentine to give to their bus drivers on February 14.
- Post your "stories from the road" – touching, funny or memorable stories about your favorite bus drivers. Children from across the country are submitting stories about how their drivers are safety superheroes, true professionals, and mentors and friends to the students they drive (see below).

**If you feel like teaming up with others in your community for a larger event, there are a number of ideas you can try, including:**

- Hold an "appreciation event" where outstanding bus drivers are honored and presented with certificates of appreciation (see below).
- Conduct a media event in a community space, where a school bus is parked for tours by the media, parents and legislators, and distributing **Love The Bus!** bumper stickers, safety cards and t-shirts to the public.
- Partner with a local school to hold a Valentine's Day party, where children can create their own **Love The Bus!** valentines and present them to drivers.

Also available, will be a number of tools that can be customized or reproduced for your local event, including:

- National American School Bus Council **Love The Bus!** press release
- Local **Love The Bus!** template materials
  - Template media advisory
  - Template legislative letter
- The American School Bus Council's "Guidelines on Pupil Transportation"
- **Love The Bus!** Educators Toolkit:
  - **Love The Bus!** interactive valentine lesson plan
  - Best practices for communicating about school transportation
  - Certificate of appreciation for school bus drivers
  - Name badges for school bus drivers
  - T-shirts for school bus drivers

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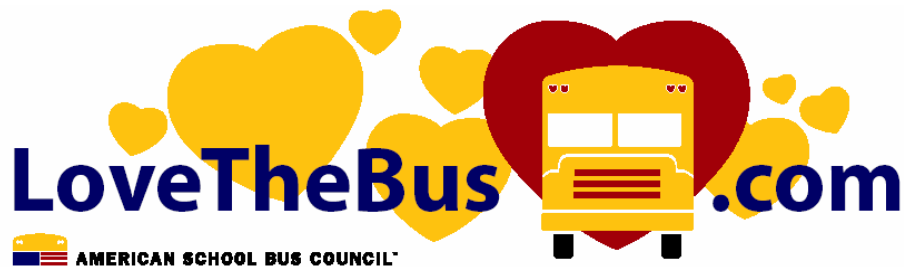
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If you would like more information on ***Love The Bus!*** – including how to hold your own event, or about similar events in Washington, D.C., and across the country – contact Bradley Gerber of the American School Bus Council at 305-347-4391 or [bradley.gerber@bm.com](mailto:bradley.gerber@bm.com).

Again, thank you for joining the American School Bus Council in thanking the best qualified, trained and loved drivers on the road.

Sincerely,

Pete Japikse  
Co-Director

Donald Tudor  
Co-Director

#### **About the American School Bus Council**

The American School Bus Council represents a unified voice of the school transportation industry – including public and private transportation providers, school bus manufacturers and state officials responsible for pupil transportation. The Council is committed to providing safe, effective, efficient and healthy transportation for the more than 25 million schoolchildren who ride more than 475,000 school buses each day.

The Council's members include NAPT (National Association for Pupil Transportation), NASDPTS (National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services), NSTA (National School Transportation Association), Blue Bird Corp. of Fort Valley, Ga., IC Corporation of Warrenville, Ill., and Thomas Built Buses of High Point, N.C.

For more information, visit [www.AmericanSchoolBusCouncil.org](http://www.AmericanSchoolBusCouncil.org). Media may call 202-530-4599 or e-mail [schoolbuscouncil@bm.com](mailto:schoolbuscouncil@bm.com).

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## “Love The Bus” Interactive Valentine Lesson Plan

### *Have you thanked your school bus driver lately?*

The yellow school bus gets millions of kids to and from school safely and reliably each day. It's time to say thank you to the unsung heroes who keep our kids safe and out of harm's way.

**Objective:** On Valentine's Day, February 14, the American School Bus Council, school transportation industry – including public and private transportation providers, school bus manufacturers and state officials responsible for pupil transportation – would like the nation's school children to say “thank you” to the 475,000 bus drivers that keep them safe each day by presenting them with a valentine created on [www.LoveTheBus.com](http://www.LoveTheBus.com).

**Outline of Activity:** American School Bus Council is asking teachers and students to participate in the activity by logging on to [www.LoveTheBus.com](http://www.LoveTheBus.com) and having each student customize and print or e-mail a “Love The Bus” valentine to their bus driver.

Students can choose from a wide variety of valentine styles, colors and graphics. They can customize their valentine with their name and their bus driver's name. The only requirement is that students complete the phrase, “I love the yellow school bus because...”

Students can also share a story about their bus driver at [www.LoveTheBus.com](http://www.LoveTheBus.com).

**Suggested Activity Duration:** 40 minutes

**Other Key Learnings:** During this activity, the American School Bus Council recommends that teachers review with students important school bus facts and safety tips including:

### **School Bus Facts to Learn and Share:**

- **School buses are the safest form of transportation** for getting children to and from school.
- Some **475,000 school buses carry 25 million children** – more than half of America's school children – each day, rarely with any serious accident.
- **Continually updated safety features** on school buses **ensure children are protected both on and off the bus.**
- **School bus drivers** are **highly trained, licensed and screened professionals** who constantly have child safety in mind.
- The **school bus industry operates** by a set of **national safety, security, health and driver qualification guidelines** that exceed those of federal and state law.

### **School Bus Safety Tips for Students:**

- Be alert to traffic. Check both ways for cars before stepping off the bus.
- Make eye contact with the bus driver, and wait for the bus driver's signal before crossing the street.
- Walk in front of the bus; never walk behind the bus to cross the street.
- While waiting for the bus, stay in a safe place away from the street.

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- Before leaving the sidewalk, look for the flashing red lights.
- Never go under the bus to retrieve something you've dropped.

**Offline Activity:** If a computer lab is not available, "thank you" letters, drawings or stories about a child's bus driver can be written and presented to bus drivers on Valentine's Day.

**Reward:** This activity can be rewarded with valentine treats or a party, although many students will find tremendous satisfaction in doing something nice for their bus driver.

**For More Information:** Educators can review more about the American School Bus Council's mission to provide safe, effective, efficient and healthy transportation for our nation's schoolchildren at [www.AmericanSchoolBusCouncil.org](http://www.AmericanSchoolBusCouncil.org).

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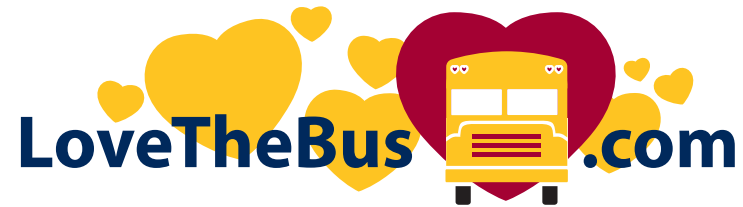
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Thanks for all you do to protect and take care of America's schoolchildren!



**AMERICAN SCHOOL BUS COUNCIL**

**and**

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(School District)

**recognize and appreciate the dedication and service of**

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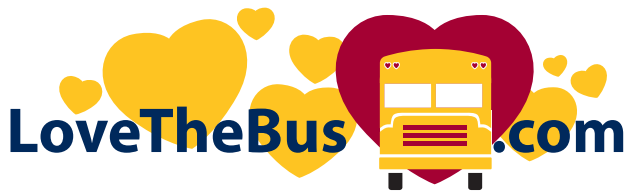
(School Bus Driver)

**on this Valentine's Day, February 14, 2007.**



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**Hello, my name is**



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Front



Back



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## Best Practices for Communicating About School Transportation

A recent survey of parents commissioned by the American School Bus Council found that six in 10 parents are concerned about having their children ride on yellow school buses. Parents cite safety, ranging from accidents to misbehaving children, to unsafe drivers and a lack of information as primary concerns.

Interestingly, the vast majority of parents, six in 10, consider the yellow school bus to be an important part of the education system, and want to be informed about safety features and procedures, driver background and qualifications, and standards governing school bus industry.

That's where you come in!

The American School Bus Council, representing a unified voice of the school transportation industry, including the public sector, the private sector and the manufacturing segment, has provided the following best practices in the form of an Educator's Toolkit.

As you are challenged to communicate critical information about school transportation to parents, district officials and other stakeholders know that you are not alone. The American School Bus Council is a resource to the **16,000 school districts** responsible for 475,000 yellow school buses that transport 25 million children to and from school each day. Like you and your district, the Council is committed to providing safe, effective, efficient and healthy transportation for our nation's schoolchildren.

Found on the Web at [www.AmericanSchoolBusCouncil.org](http://www.AmericanSchoolBusCouncil.org), the American School Bus Council is underway on a three-year public education effort to communicate to parents and legislators what educators and authorities such as the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Department of Transportation already know: **school buses are the safest form of transportation for getting children to and from school.**

We hope that you will incorporate these best practices shared by other school districts, state pupil transportation directors, school bus operators and manufacturers into your yearly operating procedures. Also, feel free to share your tips for communicating about school transportation with the American School Bus Council at [schoolbuscouncil@bm.com](mailto:schoolbuscouncil@bm.com).

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## WHO – WHAT – WHEN – WHERE RECOMMENDATIONS WHEN COMMUNICATING ABOUT SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

### WHO

1. Parents overwhelmingly want information about their child's school bus driver. Ask your school's transportation director to prepare a short biography on each bus driver containing appropriate qualifications, skills training and safety record information. These biographies should be kept on file, updated each year and mailed, e-mailed or handed to parents during "back-to-school" nights or bus-specific events.
2. Each bus driver should wear a name tag or have their name clearly displayed for parents and children to "get to know" their bus driver. A name tag template that can be customized and printed is available in the Educator's Toolkit.
3. Community allies such as police, fire and ambulance personnel, in addition to school bus drivers, operators and school, district and state pupil transportation directors, can be powerful influencers in communicating basic safety information about school transportation. Consider inviting them to participate as a speaker at informational events, or ask them to distribute safety materials door to door or within the community.

### WHAT

#### Facts to learn and share:

- The National Academy of Sciences, the U.S. Department of Transportation and other authorities agree that **school buses are the safest form of transportation** for getting children to and from school.
- Some **475,000 school buses carry 25 million children** – more than half of America's school children – each day, rarely with any serious accident.
- **Safety features** including the color and size of school buses, height, reinforced sides, flashing red lights, cross view mirrors, and crossing and stop sign arms **ensure children are protected and secure on and off the bus.**
- **School bus drivers** are **highly trained professionals** who have your child's safety in mind. They receive **specialized training** in student behavior management, loading and unloading, security and emergency medical procedures.
- **Drivers participate in** pre-employment and random **drug/alcohol testing**, frequent **driving record checks** and pass **background checks** and periodic **medical exams** to keep their Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with a School Bus Endorsement.
- The **school bus industry operates** by a set of **safety, security, health and driver qualification guidelines** that meet, and in some cases exceed, federal and state laws, and ensure that school buses are the safest mode of transportation for our nation's school children.
  - Download and print **Guidelines on Pupil Transportation** [here](#)
  - E-mail the guidelines [here](#)

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## School Bus Safety Tips

### For students:

- Be alert to traffic. Check both ways for cars before stepping off the bus.
- Make eye contact with the bus driver, and wait for the bus driver's signal before crossing the street.
- Walk in front of the bus; never walk behind the bus to cross the street.
- While waiting for the bus, stay in a safe place away from the street.
- Before leaving the sidewalk, look for the flashing red lights.
- Never go under the bus to retrieve something you've dropped.

### For parents:

- Have your child ride the school bus to and from school instead of driving or riding with teenage passengers.
- Review the above safety features with your child regularly.
- Get to know the parents of other riders. You will learn about the other children who are riding along with your child.
- Team with other parents to get involved and monitor bus stops and bus routes. Voice concerns immediately to your school district.
- Attend "back to school" nights and tour your child's school bus.
- Get to know your school's transportation coordinator and your child's bus driver. He or she is a trained professional who sees your child every day.
- Keep phone numbers handy in case the bus is delayed or in the event of an emergency.

## Dos and Don'ts When Communicating with Parents:

Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Leverage key strengths of school bus transportation, like aspects of convenience for parents</b></li><li>• <b>Focus on safety to mitigate concern, using concrete proof and support to convince doubtful parents</b></li><li>• <b>Use straightforward language and a positive tone</b></li><li>• <b>Include specific examples or details parents can visualize, where appropriate – these tend to be more believable</b></li><li>• <b>Cite credible third-party sources</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Make arguments that parents consider untenable or unrealistic (for example, that riding in their car is not as safe as riding in a school bus)</b></li><li>• <b>Avoid the seatbelt issue – parents expect this to be addressed</b></li><li>• <b>Leave room for ambiguities</b></li></ul>

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## WHEN

Consider communicating with students, parents and other stakeholders about school transportation at regular times during the year.

- Regular monthly mail or e-mail newsletter
- Back-to-school – August/September
- Daylight savings time - October
- Valentine's Day/Love The Bus – February 14
- Winter break – December
- Spring break – March/April

## WHERE

When asked during American School Bus Council's survey how parents most like to receive routine information about school bus transportation from school, more than half prefer to be informed via regular mail or e-mail. With letter/flyer sent home with child, school's Web site, information session at school or phone call being less popular.

- Include industry guidelines on pupil transportation, safety tips and biographies about bus driver qualifications, skills training and safety record information in "back-to-school" or "welcome" packets. Mail or e-mail the packets to parents.
- Hold drills to review safety information with students during the first day of school, then again before daylight savings time, on Valentine's Day, the first day following winter break and spring break (as a refresher following vacation).
- Hold specific events on school transportation for parents and encourage parents to "get to know" their school and district pupil transportation director, child's bus driver and bus monitor (if available). Invite parents to hear brief remarks from a school or community official on school bus safety features followed by a tour of district buses so parents can acquaint themselves with the modern school bus.

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*\*Note: Internet survey conducted by Penn, Schoen, Berland & Associates December 7–13, 2006. Included 1,000 parents of children ages 5–18 living at home. Survey excluded parents whose children receive special transportation to and from school due to a disability. Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level: 3.1%.*

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## Bus Driver Heroes...Stories from the Road

The yellow school bus gets millions of kids to and from school safely and reliably each day.

Beginning February 1, parents and schoolchildren will have a chance to read and post stories at [www.LoveTheBus.com](http://www.LoveTheBus.com) about these unsung heroes who keep kids safe and out of harm's way.

An example of these stories is below.

### **I love my bus driver because he or she is a...**

#### **...Safety Superhero**

It was anything but a routine drive for Winkle Bus Service Driver Janette Murray. On November 16, 2004 while bringing 42 students home from Mathewson School in Milford, CT, Ms. Murray smelled smoke in the bus and felt heat building up on the floor. She immediately pulled the bus to over to a secure location and began evacuation procedures.

Within seconds of clearing the bus, the vehicle burst into flames.

Had it not been for Ms. Murray's quick thinking, a tragedy would have occurred. Because of the extensive training that Ms. Murray has undergone, everyone safely evacuated the bus and no one was injured. Older children helped the younger ones off of the bus.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

Congratulations to Janette Murray for her courageous and heroic actions. Her quick response to an emergency incident saved the lives of all of those on board.

Ms. Murray was quoted as saying, "I was just doing my job."

**Submitted by Bill Moore, CAE**

**Executive Director**

**Connecticut School Transportation Association, Newington, CT**

#### **...True Professional**

I have a wonderful story about my child's school bus driver, Phyllis. Phyllis has now retired and has moved to Arizona. She is my inspiration and why I am now behind the wheel of a school bus.

When my son was in 2nd grade, he was waiting on the corner for the elementary bus to arrive. A little boy shoved my son to the ground in front of Phyllis' oncoming school bus. She stopped short of running my son over. She saved his life. I then came to realize that this job cannot be taken lightly or any routine route taken for granted. I recently wrote Phyllis a letter thanking her for this and how she has been my inspiration to follow in her footsteps. My son is now a sophomore in high school.

**Submitted by Kathy Gorecki**

**School Bus Driver**

**Leyden High Schools, Northlake, IL**

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## **...Mentor and Friend**

For a year I drove a school bus route on a curvy road next to a river.

Almost every day as I passed a certain house a tiny girl would be in her front yard and give me a big wave as I passed. The girl was so cute I always enjoyed this daily encounter. I found out later her name was Zoey.

The first day of the following school year arrived. I was driving this same school bus route and approached the bus stop next to the little girl's house looking for my new kindergarten student. There was Zoey, all dressed in a pretty new dress carrying a small school bag, waiting for the school bus.

I activated the appropriate bus lights and made the stop. Zoey waited for my signal and crossed the street in front of the school bus. She came to the bus door and began to climb the steps very carefully due to her small size. As she reached the top step, she stopped, and with big wide eyes and with all the exuberance and importance the small girl could gather, said to me, "I've been waiting for this day my whole life."

I still smile each time I think of Zoey's first day on the school bus.

**Submitted by Linda Coen**

**School Bus Driver**

**Brevard District School, Cocoa, FL**

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